FIRE DISASTER STORY

May 5, 1965

Nebraska National Forest

Before!

After!

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREST SERVICE • ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

FIGHTING THE FIRE

At 11:35 a.m., May 5, 1965, a lightening bolt exploded into tinder dry grass, 11 miles southwest of the Bessey District Office. Arriving within 5 minutes, two Forest Service firefighting crews faced a seven-acre range fire.

Overwhelming forces of nature took command—winds mounted in fury—up to 50 miles per hour, drove flames through grass and trees. Within an hour, 175 men were on the fire line. Volunteers came from a 100-mile radius to join the battle.

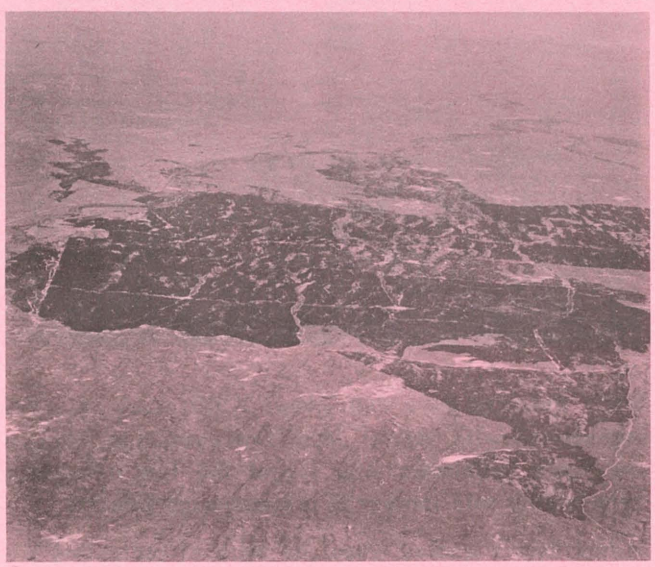
In spite of these efforts, the fire pushed forward. Word of the disaster spread rapidly—over 2,000 volunteer fire fighters joined the battle.

WHEN IT WAS OUT

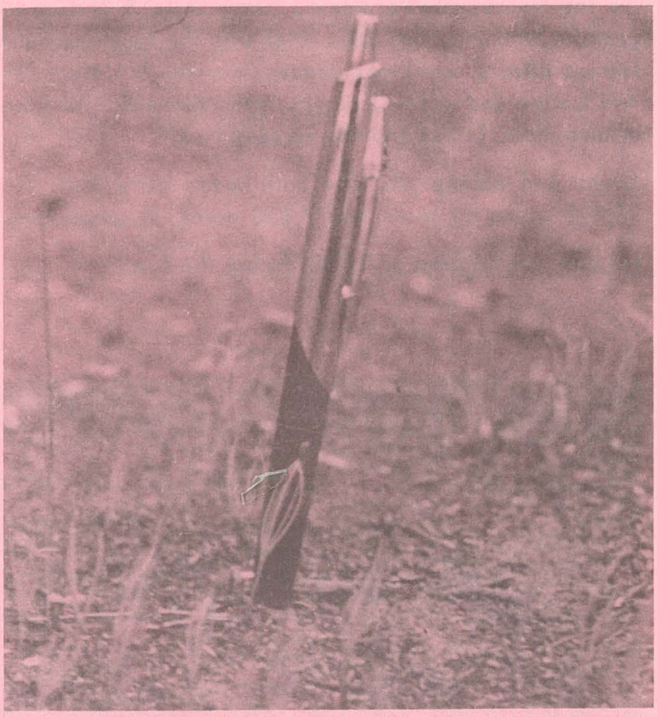
To the Nebraskan Volunteers, their State & Nation are grateful. Not until two days later was the last spark out. Heroic efforts saved residences, nursery buildings, the 4-H Lodge and several cabins, plus thousands of acres of man-made forest and the nursery itself.

Eight 4-H cabins and one bath-house were lost, plus 10,920 acres of trees and 7,820 acres of range land.

No one was injured or killed during the fire.



PLANS FOR FUTURE



Since the fire, more than about 1,500 acres are being regenerated with natural Jack Pine seedlings. Many of the same volunteers who fought the fire returned to help replant this largest of all man-made forests.

It had barely cooled when the work of replanting tree seedlings was begun. Nearly half a million trees were in the ground within a month. Another one-half million were planted in the spring of 1966. To prevent wind erosion, airplanes were used to sow the area with grass seed.

The reforestation plan prepared by the Forest Service calls for tree planting for —

- recreational developments
- soil stabilization
- wildlife cover
- planting demonstrations of living snow fences
- winter livestock protection
- Christmas tree production
- windbreaks
- and for further research plantings to find better-suited varieties of trees for the Great Plains area.

In time, this area will again be the Sandhills' Oasis of green trees.

GPO 859-130